

# OUTGOING MESSAGE

Approved For Release 2004/06/14 : CIA-RDP80R01720R000400100008-5

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DIRECTOR

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TO: IMMEDIATE SAIGON.4

*BAT trip  
Soft*

REF:

1. WE MUCH APPRECIATE COMMENTS IN REF. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF INTERAGENCY MEMO ON "LIKELY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN VIETNAM". THIS RAN IN THE PDB, THE NID, AND THE NIB ON THURSDAY, 3 APRIL.4

2. BEGIN TEXT:4

1. THE POLITICAL VIABILITY OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM HAS RESTED HEAVILY ON STRONG US SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT THIEU AND HIS EFFECTIVE RESISTANCE TO A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER. TO MOST VIETNAMESE, THESE CONDITIONS NO LONGER EXIST. AS A RESULT WE BELIEVE THAT MAJOR POLITICAL CHANGES WILL OCCUR IN COMING WEEKS AND MAY BE IMMINENT; THESE CHANGES WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO A SETTLEMENT ON COMMUNIST TERMS. IF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY SITUATION IS NOT STABILIZED, HOWEVER, SAIGON MAY COLLAPSE MILITARILY BEFORE ARRANGEMENTS TO REPLACE THIEU OR TO ATTEMPT NEGOTIATIONS CAN MATERIALIZE.4

2. THIEU'S PRESTIGE HAS BEEN IRREPARABLY DAMAGED BY THE

DATE: 3 APRIL 1975

ORIG: BELAYTON

UNIT: ACTING NIO/SSEA

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MILITARY DEBACLE IN THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE COUNTRY AND HIS EFFECTIVENESS UNDERMINED BY A GROWING SENSE OF INEVITABLE COMMUNIST VICTORY. DECISIVE AND VISIBLE LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED, BUT THIEU APPEARS ISOLATED FROM HIS OWN GOVERNMENT AND INCREASINGLY SUSPICIOUS OF THE LOYALTY OF HIS SENIOR COMMANDERS. FOR EXAMPLE, HE HAS PLACED MILITARY REGION {MR} 3 COMMANDER GENERAL TOAN UNDER SURVEILLANCE SINCE A MEETING LAST WEEKEND BETWEEN TOAN AND GENERAL WEYAND.4

3. THIEU'S SUSPICIONS ARE UNDERSTANDABLE; CRITICISM OF THE PRESIDENT IS MOUNTING WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT.4

- THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF, GENERAL VIEN, REPORTEDLY IS AGITATING IN SENIOR MILITARY CIRCLES FOR THIEU'S REMOVAL.4
- CLOSE ASSOCIATES OF THE PRESIDENT, SUCH AS HIS SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR MILITARY AND SECURITY AFFAIRS, GENERAL QUANG, APPEAR DEEPLY PESSIMISTIC OVER THIEU'S ABILITY TO REMAIN IN POWER.4
- GENERAL TRUONG, THE MR 1 COMMANDER, IS BITTER OVER

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THIEU'S DECISIONS WHICH LED TO THE COLLAPSE OF HIS  
COMMAND.4

4. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, OF A CONCRETE MOVE AFOOT  
WITHIN THE MILITARY TO REPLACE THIEU. THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT,  
IN THE PRESIDENT'S FAVOR IS THE ABSENCE OF ANY RIVAL STRONG  
ENOUGH TO OUST THE PRESIDENT AND WILLING TO STEP INTO HIS POSITION.  
BUT GIVEN THE DISSATISFACTION THAT NOW EXISTS WITHIN THE MILITARY,  
A MOVE TO FORCE THIEU'S RESIGNATION OR OUSTER BY AN INDIVIDUAL OR  
GROUP OF MILITARY OFFICERS COULD OCCUR AT ANY TIME. THE LIKELIHOOD  
OF SUCH A MOVE WILL INCREASE THE LONGER POLITICAL INDECISION  
CONTINUES AND MILITARY DETERIORATION IS UNARRESTED.4

5. THERE IS LITTLE AGREEMENT WITHIN THE CIVILIAN OPPOSITION  
ON A SUCCESSOR TO THIEU. FORMER SOUTH VIETNAMESE LEADERS,  
SUCH AS NGUYEN CAO KY, DUONG VAN "BIG" MINH, OR FORMER PREMIER  
PHAM HUY QUAT, DO NOT COMMAND ENOUGH SUPPORT TO SERVE AS A  
RALLYING POINT. MODERATE NATIONALISTS -- SUCH AS LABOR LEADER  
TRAN QUOC BUU, SENATOR TRAN VAN LAM, AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
PHAM QUANG DAN -- WHO HAVE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT THIEU WHILE MAIN-

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TAINING A DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE, PROBABLY HOPE THAT A NEW MILITARY SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE A PLACE FOR THEM. BUT THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE PRIME MOVERS IN ANY IMMEDIATE CHANGE OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN SAIGON. THE MORE RADICAL OPPOSITION LEADERS SUCH AS THE AN QUANG BUDDHISTS' THICH TRI QUANG AND THE MILITANT CATHOLIC PRIEST FATHER THANH COULD PRECIPITATE AN EARLY MILITARY MOVE IF THEY TAKE TO THE STREETS IN ALL-OUT OPPOSITION TO THIEU.

6. THIEU'S DEPARTURE WOULD NOT IN ITSELF NECESSARILY LEAD TO AN IMMEDIATE UNRAVELING OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE MORALE AND WILL TO RESIST. A NEW MILITARY LEADERSHIP, PERHAPS WITH SOME INFUSION OF CIVILIAN OPPOSITION ELEMENTS TO BROADEN ITS BASE, MIGHT MAKE AT LEAST TEMPORARY HEADWAY IN SHORING UP PUBLIC CONFIDENCE AND RALLYING THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES. BUT IN OUR JUDGMENT, SUCH A CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP AT THIS TIME COULD NOT REVERSE THE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL AND MILITARY TRENDS NOW RUNNING AGAINST SAIGON. EVEN IF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN RALLYING THEIR FORCES AND CONSOLIDATING THEIR IMMEDIATE MILITARY POSITION, THE RESPITE WILL BE BRIEF BECAUSE HANOI NOW IS DEPLOYING OVER-

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WHELMING MILITARY FORCE FOR A COUP DE GRACE.Y

7. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, DEFEATIST SENTIMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS BOUND TO SNOWBALL. THIS PROCESS IS ALREADY WELL UNDERWAY AS REFUGEES AND NEWS OF SUCCESSIVE MILITARY REVERSES TRICKLE SOUTH. AS A CONSENSUS BEGINS TO EMERGE IN SAIGON THAT COMMUNIST VICTORY IS IN SIGHT, THERE SHOULD BE NO SHORTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS EAGER TO PROTECT THEIR PERSONAL INTERESTS OR THEIR VARIOUS POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS AS BEST THEY CAN BY PARTICIPATING IN A SETTLEMENT ON COMMUNIST TERMS. IN TIME, WE BELIEVE MOUNTING DEMORALIZATION WILL LEAD TO MILITARY ACQUIESCENCE IN THE FORMATION OF ANOTHER GOVERNMENT PREPARED TO SEEK AND ACCEPT THE BEST TERMS IT CAN OBTAIN FROM THE COMMUNISTS. IN THE EVENT OF A RAPID SOUTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY COLLAPSE, HOWEVER, EVEN THE POSSIBILITY OF A TRANSITIONAL NON-COMMUNIST ADMINISTRATION WOULD DISAPPEAR.Y

8. ONE BY-PRODUCT OF THE DEMORALIZATION PROCESS NOW UNDERWAY HAS BEEN A RISING LEVEL OF ANTI-AMERICAN FEELING. ANTI-US FEELING ALREADY APPEARS TO BE RUNNING HIGH AMONG THE MILITARY UNITS AND REFUGEES ESCAPING FROM THE NORTH. AS HOPE FOR MORE US

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ASSISTANCE FADES, PRESIDENT THIEU OR ANY SUCCESSOR WOULD HAVE LITTLE REASON TO RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO POINT TO US RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION. THE COMMUNIST VIEW

9. HANOI ALMOST CERTAINLY WAS SURPRISED BY THE EXTENT AND RAPIDITY OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY COLLAPSE. THE TONE OF ITS PROPAGANDA AND THE SPEED WITH WHICH IT HAS REDEPLOYED ITS FORCES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE RETREAT, HOWEVER, MAKE IT APPARENT THAT HANOI NOW SEES VICTORY AS CERTAIN. INDEED, HANOI IS CONTINUING TO MOVE ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF ITS STRATEGIC RESERVE TO THE SOUTH.

10. HANOI CLEARLY SENSES THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF A FINAL PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL COLLAPSE IN THE SOUTH WOULD ALLOW IT TO REALIZE ITS FINAL OBJECTIVES WITHOUT THE COST OF A MAJOR ASSAULT AGAINST SAIGON. THE COMMUNISTS ARE OFFERING AMNESTY TO SOUTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY AND GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL WHO JOIN THE "REVOLUTIONARY SIDE". AND IN AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE POLITICAL UPHEAVAL IN SAIGON, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE BEEN EMPHASIZING

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THEIR WILLINGNESS TO REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS. HANOI IS INDICATING, HOWEVER, THAT THE COST OF PEACE WILL BE HIGH -- THE NUIEU MUST BE REMOVED AND A NEW SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT FORMED THAT IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT "NATIONAL CONCORD AND STRICT APPLICATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT" BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS CAN BEGIN. FURTHERMORE, COMMUNIST STATEMENTS MAKE NO MENTION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT ENVISIONED BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT, BUT ONLY DECLARE THAT NEW NEGOTIATIONS WOULD RESULT "IN THE SPEEDY SETTLEMENT OF THE AFFAIRS OF SOUTH VIETNAM."

11. THIS TERSE OFFER REFLECTS THE RADICALLY ALTERED STRATEGIC SITUATION IN VIETNAM. HANOI NO LONGER SEES THE NEED FOR A LENGTHY INTERMEDIATE STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND COALITION RULE IN THE SOUTH PRIOR TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ITS BASIC OBJECTIVE -- THE UNIFICATION OF VIETNAM UNDER COMMUNIST RULE. ALTHOUGH NORTH VIETNAMESE STRATEGY PROBABLY STILL INVOLVES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TRANSITIONAL SOUTHERN GOVERNMENT, PERHAPS WITH TOKEN PARTICIPATION BY NEUTRALIST "THIRD FORCE" ELEMENTS, IT SEEMS FAIRLY CLEAR THAT HANOI IS NOW INTERESTED IN PROVIDING ONLY THE MEREST FIG LEAF

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FOR A NORTH VIETNAMESE TAKEOVER IN THE SOUTH.4

12. IN THE EVENT OF SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, THERE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE A FAIRLY WIDESPREAD ELIMINATION OF KEY GVN AND RVNAF PERSONNEL, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO HAD BEEN CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE US. IN ADDITION, MANY THOUSANDS OF OTHERS WOULD BE KILLED, EITHER BY CONSCIOUS COMMUNIST POLICY OR BY THE ACTION OF ZEALOUS LOCAL COMMUNIST COMMANDERS AND TROOPS. THIS PROSPECT WOULD GENERATE MASSIVE EFFORTS TO ESCAPE VIETNAM, INVOLVING HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE. NONETHELESS, THE COMMUNISTS WOULD BE FACED WITH THE MASSIVE PROBLEMS OF TRYING TO REESTABLISH ORDER OUT OF CHAOS AND PANIC, AND THEY WOULD PROBABLY KEEP SOME FUNCTIONARIES IN PLACE FOR THE TASK.4

13. HANOI'S SHORTENED TIMETABLE IN THE SOUTH HAS OBVIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ROLE OF THE VIET CONG'S PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE HAS BEEN A BASIC DOWNGRADING OF THE PRG IN NORTH VIETNAMESE THINKING. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WILL SOON HAVE LITTLE INCENTIVE TO MAINTAIN THE PRG AS A SEPARATE POLITICAL ENTITY.4

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14. WE BELIEVE HANOI INTENDS TO PUSH ITS MILITARY ADVANTAGE FORCEFULLY, BUT WE ARE UNSURE AS TO THE EXACT TIMING. WE EXPECT SHARP COMMUNIST ATTACKS IN THE PROVINCES AROUND SAIGON AND IN THE DELTA IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AND BELIEVE THAT THE COMMUNISTS INTEND TO MAINTAIN OR ESCALATE MILITARY PRESSURE. WE BELIEVE THAT IN A MATTER OF MONTHS, IF NOT WEEKS, SAIGON WILL COLLAPSE MILITARILY OR A GOVERNMENT WILL BE INSTALLED THAT WILL AGREE TO A SETTLEMENT ON COMMUNIST TERMS. E2 IMPDET-H

C/OPS/INT

C/VNO

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